

A's News Clips, Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Ah spring, when a fan's thoughts turn to...

[Ray Ratto](#), San Francisco Chronicle, 2/17/2010

There's a lot of pressure on spring training this year to combat the general malaise - the NBA trade deadline will have either no Warriors news or bad Warriors news, the Sharks can't win another game until March, and in the meantime could lose any of eight players to injury, the NFL is talking mostly about uncapped years and lockouts, and West Coast basketball seems tightly restricted to the Cal and Gonzaga men and the Stanford women.

And though spring training is usually awash in renewal-of-spring hyperbole and other fake sentimentality, it does have the advantage of offering something new to offset the old.

Example: Just Tuesday, the Nationals signed Chien-Ming Wang, the former Yankees pitcher, and barring a miserable spring, he will be part of their rotation, somewhere between John Lannan and Jason Marquis. On the one hand, of course, this shows how weak the Washington pitching is; on the other, the Nationals just plugged a hole.

Spring training is like that - a little looser, a little less structured, a little less rigid than its counterparts in other sports. Even the reporting dates bend and flex depending on individual whim - the Giants' pitchers and catchers report today, Oakland's on Saturday, Cleveland's on Monday. It can't be because the Giants need more work on pitchers' fielding than the Indians, can it?

Even the purpose of spring training is different. Giants fans can't wait for the regular season to start to see if their hope is well-founded. Save basking in whatever glow Buster Posey can manage and waiting to see if general manager Brian Sabean can land the Cuban defector/first base prospect Jose Julio Ruiz, the only news that can come out of March is bad - who got hurt and can't be ready for Opening Day, did Tim Lincecum take Matt Cain and Madison Bumgarner out off-roading, stuff like that.

A's fans, on the other hand, view spring as an open-air market where they go to see their latest crateload of prospects and new boys - Ben Sheets, Kevin Kouzmanoff, Jake Fox, Coco Crisp, Michael Taylor, Chris Carter, most of the rotation, maybe even a glimpse of 16-year-old infielder Michael Feliz or the \$3.6 million of Willy Taveras' deal that Taveras took to Washington with him. Then again, A's fans are used to setting their sights toward players they

haven't seen in the home uniform before, because the turnover in Oakland is always so sweeping.

But that's the beauty of spring training - it isn't one size fits all. It's a vacation. No, it's serious business. No, it's pastoral and ethereal. No, it's the hard business of overcoming last year's shame. You make of it what you wish.

Neither the A's nor Giants have many actual 25-man decisions to make. Posey is an intriguing concept because he is expected to show both what he can do and what he cannot, given that the Giants have pretty much decided that he isn't the starting catcher yet.

Carter isn't projected to make the opening roster either, but he will be looming over first baseman Daric Barton's shoulder from the I-80 corridor, and spring is the time to see how much shadow that looming will produce. Plus, the A's big-stolen-base, no-homer outfield looks like a fascinating new twist on Moneyball (find the undervalued resource and go with it).

But in the larger sense, this spring training is about allowing folks in the Bay Area to forget the rest of the local landscape. I mean, when the news is about two wobbly stadium initiatives, an NBA franchise that is now merely a kick-me sign, one football team that still hasn't confirmed that it is satisfied with its present coach and another that hasn't confirmed it won't change its offensive scheme before training camp, a hockey team with a playoff jones, two last-place soccer teams, and even the news that the reconstituted Arena Football League isn't interested - hell, it's one big bringdown after another.

Thus, spring training starts at just the right time for these parts - just in time to take our minds off everything else that nips at our collective soul.

Plus, it isn't tape-delayed, so it's even better than the Olympics.

Poole: Lew Wolff, Bud Selig are determined to get A's out of Oakland

By Monte Poole, Oakland Tribune columnist 2/17/2010

Steve Schott whispered it during his decade as managing partner of the A's, with MLB commissioner Bud Selig nodding in agreement and eventually echoing the sentiment.

Schott's successor, the disarming yet shrewd Lew Wolff, has spent the past five years shouting it, while his pal the commissioner attempts the impossible task of concealing what sounds and looks and smells like a conspiracy.

Somewhere along the way, as San Jose was becoming paradise and Fremont the geographically suitable alternative, after the Raiders returned it was determined by these folks that Oakland is an unfit parent for its baseball team.

Not enough corporate money, Wolff moans. Nowhere to build a new ballpark, he gripes. No point in trying to be successful in Oakland, he groans. Oakland is, Wolff sighed a year ago, a colossal waste of time.

How can we expect his man Bud to conclude otherwise?

The fate of the A's-Oakland relationship sits in the hands of the commissioner, who in the coming days is expected to rule whether Oakland deserves to keep the A's.

Oakland can only consider that a warning.

Even as A's fans unite with Oakland businesses and politicians in an effort to keep the team in the city, it has long been clear Wolff wants to put the team in San Jose, which he considered the ideal home years before he bought into the franchise.

In the 11 months that have passed since Selig convened a committee to examine future prospects for a ballpark in Oakland, Wolff has been about as patient as his superficial exasperation will allow. He wants it known that he doesn't understand why it's taken so long for his college fraternity brother to abide by a basic fraternal oath: Thou shall always find a way to "hook up" his frat brother — even if the Giants claim territorial rights.

Well, it takes time for the commish pull this off without making it look as if the plot was hatched years ago, in the private room of a steakhouse, sealed with the secret frat bro handshake.

In Bud's favor, though, is his rich history of vocal disinterest in Oakland as it pertains to the A's.

He is the commish who in 1999 oversaw a vote against grocery executive Bob Piccinini, who had assembled a group and made an offer to buy the A's while stating his intention to rebuild the Walter Haas model of bonding the team with the community.

Selig is the man who showed up in Oakland in 2004 squawking about the A's inability to compete in the Coliseum, dismissing such inconvenient truths as the team's four consecutive trips to the playoffs and its 392 wins during those seasons — the winningest four-year stretch in team history.

He is the man who, with Schott and partner Ken Hofmann ready to sell, reached out to Wolff and brokered the deal for him to buy in.

Selig followed that up by meeting with John Fisher and, along with Wolff, getting the Gap billionaire to put up most of the \$180 million required to complete the deal.

It was Selig who said it was "a terrible mistake" for Charles O. Finley to move the A's from Kansas City to Oakland in 1968.

All Wolff had to do was neglect the Oakland fan base, put enough apathy in the air to trick the attendance. Done, done and done.

So, then, the decision rests with a man who has been Wolff's good friend for more than 50 years, actually recruited him into the brotherhood of baseball ownership and has stated his aversion to seeing the A's in Oakland.

Then, too, Bud is nearing retirement and wants to be remembered as more than the bookish cat who presided over the Steroid Era. Ever heard him boast about baseball's "renaissance," how it has never been more prosperous — or built more ballparks?

With Fisher at his back, Wolff has made it his mission to save the A's from the fans who have supported them, and from the city that hosted their four World Series victory parades. That's more than the other four California teams combined in the 42 years that the A's have been in Oakland.

That tradition notwithstanding, how do we not expect the predictable? In the business of sports, like the business of anything else, nothing short of corporate blackmail can open doors as efficiently as having the hook-up.

And Lew has the hook-up. As skillful as Bud is at deflecting accountability, even he can't create a tale credible enough to suggest otherwise.

Editorial: Face it: San Jose's the best spot for the A's

Mercury News Editorial 2/17/2010

Memo to Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig: Face it. Downtown San Jose is the best location for a new stadium for the A's — for the good of the team, the economics of Major League Baseball and the prosperity of Silicon Valley.

Selig is reportedly expecting an update this week from his committee analyzing alternatives for the team. We don't know what it will say. But cutting through major league politics and the specious claim that San Francisco has a God-given right to the South Bay market, it's clear that the best location for the A's is San Jose. And Selig can make that happen.

Oakland has repeatedly swung and missed at its chance to keep the A's. Owner Lew Wolff spent a year trying to plan a stadium in Fremont but was swamped with opposition at the end, and there's no reason to think a new proposal to look at the NUMMI plant site in Fremont would end any differently. But even if other cities hadn't struck out, San Jose would be the best location.

San Jose doesn't just give lip service to wanting a team. Since 2004, when it formed Baseball San Jose, it's been putting money and civic leadership behind a downtown ballpark.

It has bought land and commissioned an environmental impact report, which it's now updating with the specifics of Wolff's proposal. It's convening neighborhood groups to work on the challenges that would be presented by a ballpark in addition to planned high-speed rail and BART lines.

That same convergence of transit lines and freeways will make San Jose's Diridon Station area ideal for a stadium.

Community leadership is lined up. Conservative Mayor Chuck Reed sees eye to eye with labor-backed council members on this. Heading the grassroots campaign are businessman Michael Mulcahy and former Mayor Susan Hammer, who's probably the most popular and trusted ex-public official in town. The chamber of commerce and the Silicon Valley Leadership Group are

cheerleaders, a sign that corporations based here will step up with sponsorships crucial to the success of a franchise.

The only missing piece for San Jose is a public vote — and any city proposing a stadium is likely to face a referendum.

Really the only hurdle for San Jose is the Giants' objections. The South Bay is included in their territory — but only because the lines were redrawn when the San Francisco team tried to get its own stadium built in the South Bay in the early 1990s.

There is no magic to the boundary. San Jose's site is almost 50 miles from AT&T Park, more than twice as far as the Coliseum, where the A's now play. Some Giants fans on the Peninsula would switch allegiances, but so would some Oakland fans across the bay.

Three quarters of the 30 major league team owners would have to vote to change the Giants' territory. It would be in their financial interests. The A's now get millions of dollars a year in revenue sharing from the league. Everyone will benefit if they turn profitable, and San Jose has the highest potential.

Selig's recommendation will likely determine how the owners vote. He needs to make the right call and bring Major League Baseball to San Jose.

Lansford excited to join A's as analyst

Former third baseman to do work on pre-, postgame shows

By Jane Lee / MLB.com 2/17/2010

OAKLAND -- It takes a lot to bring Carney Lansford and wife Debbie away from their quaint home in Baker City, Ore.

Aside from a few Bay Area stints when their children were in high school, the couple has resided in the northeastern Oregon town since Lansford's former Boston teammate, Joe Rudi, invited them up for a long weekend during the 1981 strike.

"We came up and fell in love with it," Lansford said. "We bought our first home and have been here ever since."

Recently, though, the former A's great found just the right reason to make a return to the East Bay. Now 53 with 15 years of playing experience and six years of coaching under his belt, Lansford will join Comcast's A's pregame and postgame live shows as an analyst.

"It's nice for me," Lansford said Tuesday from his Oregon home. "It enables me to stay in the game in some capacity, and I get to go back to the other side of the Bay."

For the past two seasons, Lansford aided the cross-bay rival Giants as their hitting coach and, at year's end, contemplated taking time off from the game. That is, before he got a call from A's vice president of broadcasting Ken Pries.

"He was trying to decide if he was going to coach with the Rockies or take a year off, and I told him we were looking for someone to complement Shooty [Babbitt] on the show," Pries said. "I thought Carney would be a great addition."

"We're always trying to get a former player who can connect with the A's fans. Just knowing Carney as long as I have, he has a great connection with the team and has always been a great personality. Adding that to our pre- and postgame show will be great from a team standpoint."

Lansford, who played 10 seasons with the A's from 1983-1992 -- including three World Series appearances -- joins a Comcast team that will show 145 regular-season games in high definition for the first time. The former Oakland third baseman, though years removed from the team, still has several connections with the current A's staff, including pitching coach Curt Young and third-base coach Mike Gallego, both of whom were teammates of Lansford.

"I'm familiar with some of the guys, not all," Lansford said. "This gives me an opportunity to research these guys and watch the games and talk about them before or after games. For now I've been all over the Internet familiarizing myself with all of the roster moves."

Lansford admitted that thoughts of on-camera work had surfaced before, but never did he actually see the possibility coming to life.

"When you commit to living up in northeastern Oregon, you just know that the opportunity is probably not going to exist," he said. "You don't really expect anything like this to happen, but we'll see how it goes. I don't know what I'm going to do year to year right now at this time in my life, so it's a nice opportunity to try something different."

Lansford's broadcast experience extends only to a couple of A's postseason games, but the new Comcast face is already certain of what viewers can expect from him come game day.

"One thing I won't be is a second guesser, and I won't be a criticizer of players," he said. "I know from playing so long and coaching six years how tough the game is, and when you play the whole season, guys are going to make mistakes. That's just part of the game, and what's more important is how you rebound from that and handle it. So I want to focus on what they did -- both good and bad -- and what they need to do to move on."

At the same time, Lansford is not quite sure what will come out of his mouth if his son, A's Minor League pitching prospect Jared Lansford, makes his debut with the big boys as a September callup.

"If he's able to prove himself in Triple-A and make it up, that would be a great scenario," Lansford said. "Honestly though, I don't know how I'd react if I had to talk about him after making his first appearance or something."

For now though, Lansford will enjoy watching Jared and his other son -- Josh, a Cubs infield prospect -- get some looks in Arizona shortly. He'll be around the area for only a few days before preparing to make the move with his wife near Comcast's studios in San Francisco.

"This will keep him close to the game and also allow him time with his family," said Pries, who has known Lansford since the late 1980s. "I think it's a good fit for both him and us."

"He loves the game, and that passion will come across to the viewers. His personality is such that he's not afraid to say what's on his mind. I think that's going to be great, too."